

we have been through as a nation. After all of the suffering that has taken place—the businesses lost, the savings lost, the jobs lost—for goodness' sake, let's not come up with some halfhearted effort. Let's stand up to the Wall Street lobbyists who are going to try to water down this bill and tell them no. We are going to call for a vote on a bill that has some teeth in it, something worth voting for, something that will guarantee that we will never go through this kind of recession ever again in our economy.

I think we owe that to the American people, and I hope that next week, come Monday afternoon at 5 o'clock, when this Senate convenes for a vote, I hope we have a strong bipartisan vote to move forward on this whole idea of Wall Street reform. I believe that is in the best interests of our country. I commend Senator DODD and Senator LINCOLN. I urge them to come together, bring their two bills together, and to come up with an agreement that can lead us into this kind of happy day where we have this kind of legislation.

Mr. President, I thank you for allowing me to speak in morning business, and if there is no one seeking recognition, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RHODE ISLAND FLOODING

Mr. REED. Mr. President, last month, my State was hit by the worst nonhurricane floods in the history of the State, at least in the last 200 years.

Our Governor has preliminarily assessed the damage in the hundreds of millions of dollars, which is a significant figure for the smallest State in the Union. This disaster came at the worst moment for my state. Rhode Island is struggling with an economic collapse that has left it with a 12.7-percent unemployment rate and decimated State and local financial resources.

Indeed, many of the homeowners and businesses who were hit hardest by the floods were among those already struggling to make ends meet. I toured the State, along with my colleague, Sheldon Whitehouse, and met with constituents from Cumberland to Westerly, from the north to the south, as they worked to clean their homes and businesses. We could see the turmoil, as well as their physical and emotional strain and stress. They are tired. They are frustrated, and they are asking for our help. I admire the spirit of people who are willing to pitch in and help their neighbors, and that was evident throughout the crisis. This significant blow came on top of the economic blows we have already suffered. A flood like this is difficult in good times and

it is truly trying in bad times, as we have seen in Rhode Island.

I wish to commend FEMA and all the professionals in emergency management who have come to Rhode Island for their help in the recovery. They are doing a marvelous job. The speed of the response, including from Secretary Napolitano, has been tremendous. She was up there on Good Friday looking at the flood damage. The FEMA teams were on the ground. Deputy FEMA Administrator Rich Serino was there. He visited the damage with me. This is emblematic of the commitment of the FEMA task force. It is not only FEMA. It is also the Small Business Administration. The regional EPA director was there, the regional small business administrator was there. We had representatives from the Army Corps of Engineers and the district engineer.

The most emblematic story was told to me in Washington by a Rhode Islander who was visiting. She was a visiting nurse. She said her sister was at home on Easter. She had some flood damage. The doorbell rang, and it was FEMA. They said: We work 7 days a week. Here is the estimate of the damages, and we will be able to help you in this way.

Even with this dramatic and effective response, the damage was widespread. It covered every corner of the State. This was the first time we have seen, in my lifetime and going back a long time, not only surface water coming over the banks of rivers—there are some areas that perennially flood, similar to anywhere in the country—this was groundwater. We had been so saturated with rain for weeks and weeks. When the final deluge came, there was no place to hold the water. It came up through cellars, through sump pumps, through everything. There were very few parts of the State, very few homes unaffected by at least minor basement flooding; in some cases, very major water damage.

The story of the Pawtuxet River is an example of what transpired. Let me also say that in my course of traveling around, I was reeducated in the development of northern industrial communities. I am looking at the Senator from New Hampshire. The development started with a mill on a stream for water power. Then they built mill cottages around that. Those mills are still there. Those cottages are generally occupied today by relatively low- or moderate-income people. The mill owner, I recall now, put his house on the top of the hill, not around the mill. So that is Rhode Island. That is Massachusetts. That is Connecticut. That is New Hampshire. When these waters flood, you perennially get some communities that see damage from surface water. This is the first time we saw this incredible groundwater as well.

We are a community of rivers and mill villages. The Blackstone River is where the American Industrial Revolution began, the Pawtuxet River in Cranston, the Pawcatuck River, the

Pocasset River in Johnston and Cranston—they all were above flood stage. The Pawtuxet River, in my hometown of Cranston, on March 15, crested at a record high of 15 feet. Remarkable. Neighborhoods along the banks flooded as homes and businesses were evacuated. I toured those neighborhoods later in the week and saw the damage. Again, along with Senator WHITEHOUSE, I worked to support a major disaster declaration which was promptly granted. The people of Rhode Island appreciate President Obama very quickly supporting a major disaster declaration, not only for individuals but also for public entities, the cities and towns. This is something he did with great speed and great efficiency. I thank him personally.

Actually, the initial flooding was around March 12 or 13. Then we got the second deluge. It was a two-stage event. As the rains were falling, one woman profiled on local television looked in exhaustion at the new furnace she just installed. In anticipation of the second flood, there was an attempt to move vehicles, furnaces, et cetera around, to shore up or raise equipment on factory floors. But the rapidity and extent of the rain was such that the flood was there before many people could react.

Let me try and give a sense of the damage. This horizontal axis runs south-north under the overpass. This is Route 95, the principal interstate running along the east coast. It was shut down for two days because of flooding. The road was completely inundated with water, completely covered. Then, in the next picture, this is the city of Warwick's wastewater plant, totally engulfed in water. In addition to that, the city of Warwick is also home to our airport. So for 2 days, when you got off a plane, you saw a sign that asked you to respectfully use restrooms someplace else or the Porta-John because the airport could not use their toilets. The whole city asked their citizens to suspend flushing for 2 days. So this impact is something we have never witnessed before. The next photograph is the Warwick Mall, one of the major shopping centers in the State of Rhode Island. It is totally engulfed in water and the inside is flooded. These are stores and retail establishments. They are still trying to reopen it. This facility employs about 1,000 people. They are still out of work. When you have 12.7-unemployment rate and 1,000 people can't work because they have been flooded, that is adding excruciating pain to something that is already difficult. I must commend the owner of the mall, Aram Garabedian. Aram is indefatigable. Nothing is going to defeat him. Immediately, he was in here cleaning up. It is on the road to recovery and return, but this has been a blow economically to the State. As I said, in Rhode Island, because of our small size and community, there are five or six principal malls. Essentially, 20 percent of our mall sector is out of business.